

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

BEFORE THE ATOMIC SAFETY AND LICENSING BOARD

In the Matter of )  
COMMONWEALTH EDISON COMPANY ) Docket Nos. 50-454  
(Byron Station, Units 1 and 2) ) 50-455

TESTIMONY OF JAMES G. KEPPLER,  
NRC REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

The purpose of my testimony here today is to assist the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board in its assessment of quality assurance issues at the Byron Nuclear Power Station by providing my perspective on the Byron Reinspection Program.

In early 1982, I initiated a series of special team inspections at most reactors under construction in Region III. This effort grew out of the identification of serious quality assurance deficiencies identified at the Zimmer construction site and several other nuclear construction sites throughout the country. The purpose of these inspections was to see whether there were other sites within Region III with quality problems similar to Zimmer that may not have been recognized previously. While our extensive team inspection effort at Byron (100 man days) did not disclose significant problems with the construction of the plant, we did identify a number of quality assurance violations. The most significant of these brought into question the qualifications of contractor inspectors performing quality control checks. As a result of these findings, the NRC required Commonwealth Edison Company to carry out

a program of reinspections to determine whether quality control inspectors who may not have been properly certified had overlooked significant safety-related construction deficiencies in their inspections.

I want to take this opportunity to emphasize to the Board that, despite the identification of certain quality assurance problems at the Byron site, my staff and I had, and continue to have, confidence in the quality of completed construction at Byron. This confidence is based on our overall inspection effort and was reinforced by the special team inspection conducted in early 1982. The applicant's reinspection program further reinforced our confidence. Unfortunately, I believe that in the August 1983 hearing we may have failed to convey to this Board our degree of confidence.

I close by stressing that Region III's confidence in Byron is not based on the Reinspection Program itself, extensive as it was, but is based on the total inspection effort since 1974. This effort provides the basis for our conclusion that Byron will be completed properly and can be operated safely.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF JAMES G. KEPPLER

James G. Keppler is Regional Administrator of the Nuclear Commission's Region III Office.

The Regional Office in Glen Ellyn, Illinois is responsible for inspection and enforcement activities at NRC licensed facilities in eight midwestern states. This encompasses 23 nuclear power plants now in operation, and 10 plants under construction.

Mr. Keppler joined the AEC in 1965 as a reactor inspector. Prior to his present post as Regional Administrator, he was Chief of the Reactor Testing and Operations Branch in the AEC Headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland.

He is a 1956 graduate of LeMoyne College in New York State. Mr. Keppler's experience in the nuclear field includes nine years with General Electric Company, first in its Aircraft Nuclear Propulsion Department and later in its Atomic Power Equipment Department.